

How to Encourage Culture Change for People with Disabilities

1. Strong and ongoing commitment by top management, which sets a tone of inclusion and helps change or reinforce corporate norms and managerial/employee behaviors to improve treatment and opportunities for employees with disabilities;
2. Implementing training programs for employees that provide information about disability to help modify expectations and combat stereotypes, and provide skills for dealing with people with disabilities that help decrease discomfort and anxiety (especially regarding the most stigmatized disabilities);
3. Selecting managers and supervisors committed to incorporating people with disabilities into the workforce and ensuring they have adequate opportunities so advance;
4. Putting the treatment of people with disabilities into the evaluation and reward systems for managers, providing resources and incentives for mentoring, training, and efforts to accommodating workers and job applicants with disabilities;
5. Working with unions to ensure that the provisions of collective bargaining agreements allow for accommodating workers and job applicants with disabilities;
6. Broadening the company's recruitment strategies to include working with disability organizations, such as Centers for Independent Living, to help identify qualified candidates for employment positions;
7. Ensuring that the achievements of employees with disabilities are recognized throughout the organization to help combat negative stereotypes (while being careful not to reinforce the image of people with disabilities as "saints");

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8. Working with disability organizations, rehabilitation facilities, and local high schools and colleges to develop corporate internships for people with disabilities to increase their job skills and the company's and co-workers' knowledge of their abilities, sponsoring training programs that increase the skills and employ-abilities of people with disabilities, and broadening the organization's pool of qualified job candidates with disabilities;
9. Encouraging employees with disabilities to form their own networks or caucuses within the company, providing information, support, and an institutional vehicle that can present the concerns of employees with disabilities to management;
10. Emphasizing flexibility and personalized attention to the needs of employees, which decreases the saliency of accommodations for employees with disabilities and gives managers freedom to modify to job assignments and use non-standard work arrangements such as telecommuting and flextime;
11. Increasing autonomy so that employees can modify the way they do their jobs, taking advantage of their individual skills and abilities (and decreasing the saliency and "separateness" of accommodations so that coworkers are less likely to react negatively, for instance through the use of universal workplace design strategies and accessible technologies) (Schartz, Schartz, & Blanck, 2002);
12. Reviewing human resource policies, such as job analysis methods and interviewing techniques, to see how they limit the ability of individuals to show they are "qualified" and can meet the essential requirements of a job;
13. Ensuring that co-workers have significant contact with employees with disabilities in informal and recreational settings, as well as formal work activities, to dispel stereotypes and build stronger working relationships.

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